



Mojave Desert Air Quality Management District
14306 Park Avenue, Victorville, CA 92392
(760) 245-1661

MEDIA RELEASE

PAGE ONE OF TWO

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For further information contact:

Violette Roberts, Community Relations & Education Manager

Mojave Desert AQMD (760) 245-1661 ext. 6104

**HIGH DESERT RESIDENTS BREATHE CLEANEST AIR
IN SEVEN YEARS THIS SUMMER**

Victorville – It's official: in 2006, High Desert residents breathed some of the cleanest air in the region's monitored history, with only 30 days exceeding the federal .08 parts per million (ppm) eight-hour ozone standard between May and October, Southern California's official "smog season."

The 30 exceedances recorded locally represent a 51% reduction from 2002, when 61 exceedances of the federal eight-hour health standard were measured within the MDAQMD's boundaries, which encompass San Bernardino County's High Desert and Riverside County's Palo Verde Valley. The MDAQMD began utilizing the current federal eight-hour standard to measure local levels of ozone – the primary component of photochemical smog – in 1999.

Considering the extremely hot temperatures gauged this summer, the fact that only 30 days exceeded federal health standards is quite an achievement, according to Eldon Heaston, Executive Director of the MDAQMD. "Last year by this time, 43 days had exceeded the federal

PAGE TWO OF TWO

eight-hour standard,” commented Heaston. “Clearly, the High Desert’s emission reduction efforts and those of the South Coast AQMD are paying off.”

The South Coast AQMD is the agency responsible for regulating sources of air pollution in Orange County and major portions of Los Angeles, Riverside and San Bernardino Counties. A majority of the MDAQMD’s air pollution originates within the South Coast AQMD, then is blown into the High Desert by prevailing southwesterly winds. During the summer of 2006, a total of 86 days exceeded the federal eight-hour ozone standard within the South Coast AQMD’s boundaries.

“As emissions continue to decline in the L.A. basin, the High Desert will reap the benefits in the form of cleaner, more healthful air,” stated Heaston. He also credited local industry’s emission reduction efforts and progressively cleaner fuels for contributing to reduced ozone levels this summer.

Ground level ozone is a strong irritant that can cause constriction of the airways, forcing the respiratory system to work harder in order to provide oxygen. Children, the elderly and individuals with heart or lung disease are particularly susceptible to the effects of smog, which can also increase symptoms for individuals affected by asthma or bronchitis.

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